



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 13 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
13 MAY 1968

1. Czechoslovakia

The Prague-Moscow confrontation seems to have become one of watchful waiting.

No significant Soviet troop movements have been noted over the weekend, but the Russians have trained their propaganda guns on Prague. For their part, the Czechs show little tendency to cave in. Neither are they going out of their way to antagonize the Soviets. They may be moving to mute some of the more discordant voices at home--a prominent liberal has publicly called for an end to indiscriminate attacks on the party.

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2. France

Given the emotional student issue and widespread labor discontent, the call for a general strike today is likely to get considerable support from workers. The government's concessions have done little to defuse the situation. Demonstrations are planned along with the strike. These easily could get out of hand.

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3. Australia

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4. Congo

Pressing economic and administrative problems have been allowed to drift while Mobutu goes junketing around Africa. Paper work stacking up on Mobutu's desk includes recommendations for cutting expenditures in an effort to bail the Congolese budget out of its deepening deficit.

Mobutu may paste on a few stop-gap measures, but, so long as the government keeps floundering along, he is likely to remain more interested in travel than in getting down to the hard work of finding a lasting solution.

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5. Burma

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6. Dominican Republic

The leftists are talking about trying to disrupt municipal elections to be held this coming Thursday. Any violence would be mostly in Santo Domingo, but the security forces will be on their toes and probably can handle the situation.

7. Panama

David Samudio, the government's candidate, seems to have a slight edge in the few returns so far reported. No final tally is expected before tonight, however.

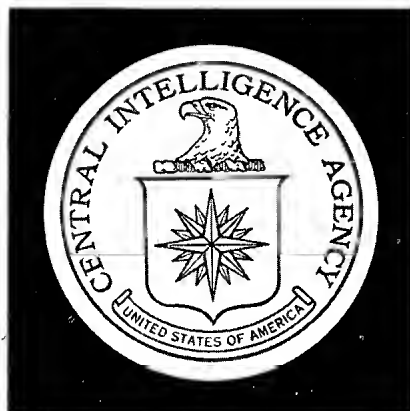
Arias supporters already are shouting "foul," but, aside from some cases of ballot box theft

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things have been relatively calm for a Panamanian election. Real trouble, if it comes, would be more likely tonight or tomorrow--particularly if the government carries through with its plans to declare Samudio the winner regardless of the balloting.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

13 May 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Sets Its Conditions Regarding Paris Talks:
During the weekend the North Vietnamese laid out their full set of conditions for further diplomatic progress and warned that if the US fails to comply, "difficulties" will arise during the talks.

Hanoi on 12 May broadcast in English a summary of a Nhan Dan editorial, again stressing that the "first question" for the Paris talks is ending the bombing and "all other acts of war." Dropping any earlier ambiguities about the specifics of "acts of war," the paper tabled Hanoi's maximum demands. It specified that not only the bombing but all overflights, including reconnaissance and leaflet drops, as well as naval gunfire, artillery firing across the Demilitarized Zone, and sabotage operations must end. The halt to these actions must be "definitive and unconditional" and include the entire territory of North Vietnam.

In its most direct reference to the issue of reciprocal Communist military restraint, the paper said that the US has "no right whatsoever to set any conditions to the North Vietnamese Government." Like most other recent North Vietnamese statements, it did not mention the San Antonio formula or specifically rule out some reciprocal move.

According to Nhan Dan, Hanoi already has shown its "good will" by agreeing to the Paris talks, and the next move is up to the US. The editorial did not threaten to inflict the usual military "punishment" or to break off the talks if the US fails to stop the bombing. It merely warned that the US would be responsible for any "difficulties" during the talks.

North Vietnamese statements have made a special point of labeling the discussions opening on Monday as "formal talks," rather than the preliminary contacts the

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Communists envisaged prior to 3 May. After the discussion of procedural matters in Paris on 11 May, the spokesman for the North Vietnamese carefully noted that agreement had been reached on official talks between "Americans and North Vietnamese." Other statements often imply that even postbombing talks will be strictly bilateral by saying they will involve "other problems of concern to the two sides."

Hanoi clearly anticipates, however, that other parties will be drawn in at some point. The Communists have moved quickly to bring up their new front organization in South Vietnam as one of the parties to later negotiations. Answering a question about who would represent South Vietnam in Paris, the spokesman for the North Vietnamese responded that the Liberation Front and the new Vietnam Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces were the "authentic representatives of our compatriots," and would speak for the South.

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Peking and the Paris Talks: Peking is maintaining its silence on the current talks in Paris. The visit of Thai Prime Minister Thanom to the United States, however, was used by the New China News Agency on 10 May to reiterate Peking's charge that the United States intends to occupy South Vietnam, using the dual tactics of "peace talks hoax" and "war blackmail."

China's unwillingness to take public notice of the negotiations was made even more obvious when it failed to report the presence of senior members of the North Vietnamese negotiating team in Peking on 7 and 8 May. The Chinese were silent even though the Vietnam News Agency reported that Xuan Thuy and his colleagues en route to Paris were met at the Peking airport by Foreign Minister Chen Yi and other Chinese officials.

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Soviet Union's Attitude Toward Peace Talks: The Soviets continue to take an approving view of the talks. Izvestia on 11 May spoke of the "favorable atmosphere" in Paris and took an oblique swipe at the Chinese by adding that, "it is obvious that the peace-loving forces in all countries will do their utmost to strengthen that atmosphere." On 12 May the Italian Communist Party paper L'Unita quoted Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko as saying in an interview that Hanoi's agreement to talk opens a "real road" to a peace settlement. Gromyko coupled this with a re-assertion of Moscow's intent to continue aid to the Vietnamese Communists.

Moscow also continues to mix its endorsement of the talks with claims that the responsibility for success in negotiations will lie with the United States. Pravda on 12 May charged that the US is planning to expand the war and called this a "policy which lies like a black shadow on the Paris negotiations."

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Conflicting French Statements on Liberation Front Presence: Etienne Manac'h, who heads the Asian bureau of the French Foreign Ministry, told a US official that no National Liberation Front officials were in Paris yet. He repeated earlier information

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that two Front men were waiting in Prague but they did not wish to proceed without agreement on their status. Manac'h said France wanted Front representation limited to a press office, although the Front seemed to be holding out for something more official.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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